



## AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR Suicide Prevention

July 17, 2013

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
1131 Longworth House Office Building  
U. S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Danny Davis  
2159 Rayburn House Office Building  
U. S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Cassidy and Davis:

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention is pleased to write in support of the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act Reauthorization of 2013 that you both plan to sponsor. This legislation renews the commitment to critically important youth and college suicide prevention programs administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, ensuring they are best designed to meet the needs of those they are intended to serve.

The Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act (GLSMA) currently supports active youth suicide prevention grants in 40 States, 38 Tribes or Tribal organizations, and 85 institutions of higher education. Unfortunately, more than 38,000 Americans die by suicide annually and suicide remains the second-leading cause of death for adolescents and young adults between the ages of 10 and 24 and results in 4,800 lives lost each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

While much has been achieved thanks to the successful grants supported by the GLSMA, there remains much to do. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “a nationwide survey of youth in grades 9-12 in public and private schools in the United States (U.S.) found that 15% of students reported seriously considering suicide, 11% reported creating a plan, and 7% reported trying to take their own life in the 12 months preceding the survey.” The 2010 American College Health Association’s National College Health Assessment II noted that 45.6% of students surveyed reported feeling that things were hopeless and 30.7% reported feeling so depressed it was difficult to function during the past 12 months.

Since its creation in 2004, the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act has provided resources to communities and college campuses all across the country, and supported needed technical assistance to develop and disseminate effective strategies and best practices related to youth suicide prevention.

AFSP supports all three components of the GLSMA, which provide a comprehensive approach to addressing the national problem of youth suicide. Specifically, the State and Tribal program fosters the creation of public-private collaborations and the development of critically needed prevention and early intervention strategies. Next, the Campus Suicide Prevention Program enhances services, outreach and education for students with mental health or substance use disorders and calls for the development of best practice for the delivery of such services. Finally, the Suicide Prevention Resource Center provides information and training to States, Tribes, and tribal organizations, institutions of higher education, and public organizations or private non-profit groups in an effort to prevent suicide among all ages, particularly among high risk groups, such as youth.

AFSP is grateful to you and your colleagues for your strong bipartisan approach regarding this program. We thank you for your support of this effort and demonstrating extraordinary leadership on youth suicide prevention.

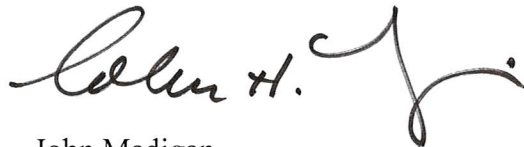
We are most grateful to you and your staff for your work on this life-saving legislation. Your unwavering commitment to youth suicide prevention undoubtedly has important implications for the current and future health and wellbeing of our nation's youth. We welcome the opportunity to work with you and your staff to ensure that the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act is promptly acted on and approved by the US House of Representatives.

We have asked Trevor Summerfield, AFSP Manager of Federal Policy to work with your staff teams to coordinate and work on this legislation. Trevor may be reached at 202-449-3600, ext. 102, or by email at [tsummerfield@afsp.org](mailto:tsummerfield@afsp.org)

Sincerely,



Robert Gebbia  
Executive Director



John Madigan  
Senior Director of Public Policy